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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 000495

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTIONS LEAD-UP: ARRESTS CONTINUE,
POTENTIAL CANDIDATES REPORTEDLY BLOCKED FROM REGISTERING

REF: A. CAIRO 389

[B.](#) CAIRO 448

[C.](#) CAIRO 489

Classified By: Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
Catherine Hill-Herndon, for reason 1.4 (d).

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Summary: In the lead-up to Egypt's April 8 local council elections, dozens of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) campaign workers and candidates continue to be arrested daily. An estimated 400-700 MB members have been detained in the past five weeks. On March 10, the MB announced that it had aimed to register 10,000 candidates for the elections (so as to contest roughly twenty-percent of the approximately 50,000 seats up for election), but that only 60 MB-affiliated aspiring candidates had been able to register to date. The candidate registration period ends at close of business on March 13. The GOE appears to be aggressively engaged in the pre-election disqualification of opposition candidates; the MB, as well as the liberal Wafd and Democratic Front parties, and the leftist Nasserite party, all report that the GOE is systematically blocking aspiring candidates from registering, by physically blocking candidates from submitting their application paperwork, not giving candidates key personal government-issued documents needed to register, or by closing registration offices so that candidates cannot submit the required forms. End summary.

ISLAMIST, LIBERAL, AND LEFTIST CANDIDATES
ALLEGEDLY PREVENTED FROM REGISTERING

[¶2.](#) (SBU) The MB asserts that the GOE is systematically blocking MB members from registering as candidates, by arresting aspiring candidates, physically blocking candidates from submitting their application paperwork, not giving candidates key personal government-issued documents needed to register, or by closing registration offices so that candidates cannot submit required forms. Some scattered reports have surfaced of prospective MB candidates being beaten by plainclothes thugs and security service officials. In a March 10 press conference, MB parliamentary bloc leader Saad Al Katatni said, "The Brotherhood was ready to register to run in the local council elections. But, so far, hundreds of the group's potential candidates have been snatched from their homes by police."

[¶3.](#) (C) The government also appears to be blocking the registration of candidates from a variety of legal opposition parties - the liberal Al Wafd party announced it planned to run 1000 candidates, but that to date, only 100 candidates had been able to register. The Wafd's secretary-general told us on March 12, "We are facing tremendous problems and obstacles everywhere. I have not yet lost hope ... We still have one more day to try to register candidates." Leaders of

the liberal Democratic Front party told us they were trying to field 60 candidates in six provinces, but that, "so far, we have only been able to register eighteen out of the sixty We are facing the same struggle as everyone else of being prevented from submitting our registration paperwork." According to press reports, the leftist Nasserist party had planned to run 450 candidates, but none have completed the registration process, due to what the Nasserites term "the Separation Wall that Egyptian security services have built nationwide around the offices where candidates are supposed to submit their nominations." As a result, the Nasserist party is reportedly planning to withdraw from the elections.

¶14. (SBU) On March 11, an Ismailiya court ruled that local government officials must accept the nomination paperwork of 47 MB members who had been prevented from submitting the forms. It is not yet apparent if local officials will implement the court ruling. The MB has announced that it was planning to field several female candidates, but that they all have been prevented from registering. Ibrahim Abu Aouf, the MB's spokesman in Alexandria, told reporters on March 9 that ten female MB candidates from Alexandria had tried to register, but that none had been allowed to submit their registration paperwork, and some had been summoned to State Security offices and threatened with unspecified consequences if they continued to try to run. "The regime believes that pressuring us will result in us withdrawing from the elections, but that is an illusion," he said. "If elections were held for funeral homes, the MB would still run in those election, irrespective of the results. We are determined to use our constitutional right of running in elections, regardless of the obstacles and problems, and to let the Egyptian people have the final word."

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¶15. (SBU) While approximately sixty MB-affiliated candidates have managed to register to date, it is still not certain that they will be allowed to stand for the elections. After the registration period closes on March 13, the GOE has until March 23 to review the lists of potential candidates, and can conceivably strike any of them off of the list. According to Ministry of Interior decree 358/2008, the following are the requirements to register as a local council candidate: (1) candidate's birth certificate or national ID, to ensure that the candidate is 25 years old, (2) proof that the prospective candidate is registered to vote in the local administrative unit he/she is applying to run from, (3) payment of registration fees (100 LE (roughly USD 20) for governorate council, 50 LE for city, district, or neighborhood council, 25 LE for village council), (4) copy of the candidate's police record, demonstrating that the candidate has no prior criminal convictions, (5) official certificate of resignation, if the prospective candidate is a member of the judicial authority, armed forces, or police, (6) certification of resignation of mayors, police chiefs, and heads of local administrative units, should the council they are running for fall under their jurisdiction, (7) proof of having completed military service or being exempted from it, and (8) proof of possession of agricultural land, should the candidate be running for a "farmers" seat.

450-700 MB MEMBERS ARRESTED IN THE PAST FIVE WEEKS

¶16. (SBU) Dozens of MB activists continue to be detained daily (ref B). The MB asserts that 700 MB members have been arrested in the past five weeks alone, due to their work on local elections campaigns, either as candidates, or as campaign workers, while local political analysts estimate the number of recent MB detainees ranges between 450-700. The government has not issued any official statement on the detentions. In March 7 comments to journalists, MB Deputy Supreme Guide Mohamed Habib said that the MB will continue to attempt to run in the April 8 elections, "even if all the

members of the Guidance Council are arrested." His comments were in apparent response to the March 6 arrest of Mahmoud Ghozlan, a sixty-something year old member of the MB's Guidance Council, the organization's highest body. Habib commented that the mass arrests "clearly demonstrate that the National Democratic Party's (NDP) claims and slogans of democracy are patently false Recent events also demonstrate that the NDP is not capable of fair competition against the MB. That is why the NDP has resorted to these criminal measures and unusual steps which defame Egypt and its dignity abroad." At least 37 MB members in detention are reportedly attempting to register from prison as candidates for the elections

MB ORGANIZES SOME DEMONSTRATIONS

¶7. (SBU) Several MB-organized demonstrations have been held over the past week to protest the problems in the registration process. The largest was on March 9 in the Nile Delta city of Tanta, when 5,000-10,000 demonstrators, led by 15 MB parliamentarians, gathered in front of the local council building, holding copies of the Koran and placards stating, "Where Is the Purported Democracy When The Doors to Candidate Nomination Are Shut?" and "Stop Police Intervention in Local Council Elections!" According to press reports, riot police dispersed the protesters with water cannons. There has also been a series of smaller demonstrations in past days in the coastal city of Alexandria, the largest of which was on March 10, when two hundred demonstrators, including MB members and representatives from the Ghad and Nasserite parties, protested in front of the local council building, carrying signs reading, "Running for Local Councils is a Right for All Egyptians." Governor Adel Labib met with representatives of the protesters to hear their complaints. 1,500 protesters also reportedly demonstrated earlier this week in front of government offices in Port Said.

STATE SECURITY'S ROLE

¶8. (C) In recent conversations with NDP-affiliated Alexandria local council members, all were openly dismissive of the elections. In their view, the elections are essentially a "coronation" of whomever the NDP nominates. One leading member of the council noted that GOE concern about "independents" (read: Muslim Brotherhood) winning seats is extremely high, and thus there is a "very tough" police

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vetting process to get registered as a candidate. "Even the NDP candidates are being thoroughly checked," to ensure they are indeed NDP members in good standing, and not MB "plants." Another independent Alexandria local council member told us that he recently had been called by a State Security officer and told to run as an NDP member, or not run at all. The council member is reluctant to run for the NDP, as he feels no connection with the party, and believes such an association would hurt his reputation with his constituents. He noted the incongruity of such a call coming from State Security, rather than the NDP, demonstrating the depth of involvement of the security services in the upcoming elections.

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